

IV. ACHIEVING THE VISION

OPEN SPACE- A

A. INTRODUCTION

The views of open land and forested landscapes within Newtown lead to a public perception that large areas of the Town are “open space,” without distinction as to the ownership characteristics of the viewed landscape. During the past twenty years, 13,000 acres of open land (33% of Newtown’s total land area) were developed for residential subdivisions. Newtown is one of the faster growing towns in Connecticut. The residential land development pressures which consumed 1/3 of the Town’s landscape during the past twenty years show no signs of abatement. As a consequence, future development will continue to consume open land, affecting the Town’s visual character.



Orchard Hill Nature Center

The concept of open space preservation has broad based community support in Newtown, as evidenced by the results of the POCD Community

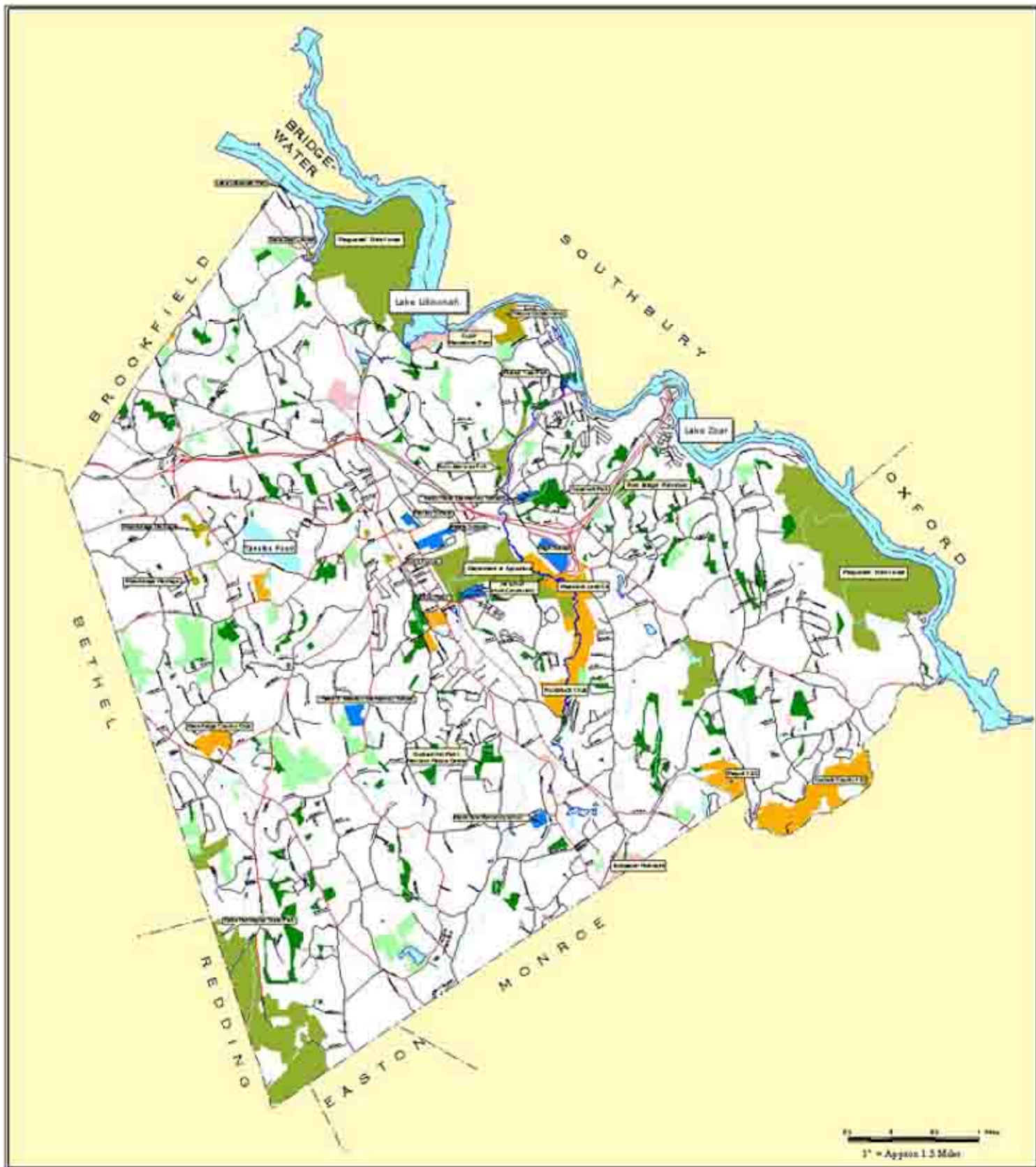


State Protected Agricultural Land- Fairfield Hills

Planning Survey and the comments of residents at the POCD planning workshop. The financial resources available to the Town to preserve open space are limited and it is therefore important to develop an element of the POCD that describes current open space conditions, defines policies related to the preservation, use and maintenance of open space and proposes implementation actions to achieve policy recommendations. Plan Memorandum #6, Open Space, provides a full examination of this subject.

B. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The open space planning process began with an investigation of Newtown’s current open space inventory. The inventory process was initiated with a broad definition of open space, to include: State parks, forests and agricultural lands; town parks; town open space; Newtown Forest Association lands; land trust properties; major utility land holdings; and privately owned open space lands, including Newtown’s two golf courses and fish and game conservation organizations. While the latter categories are not open to the public and are not “protected” open space, their presence affects the visual open space appearance of the community and their loss would represent an erosion of Newtown’s community character. The attached map Parks and Open Space Resources provides a visual description of the location of open space lands within the Newtown and Table 3, Inventory of Protected Open Space, summarizes protected open space lands within Newtown, by ownership category. Newtown’s current inventory of protected open space is estimated at 5,788 acres, which represents approximately 14.8% of Newtown’s land area.



SOURCE:
AD HDC OPEN SPACE TASKFORCE
LAND USE OFFICE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

THIS MAP WAS DEVELOPED FOR USE AS A
PLANNING DOCUMENT. DELINEATIONS MAY
NOT BE EXACT.

LEGEND

 TOWN OF NEWTOWN	 SCHOOL
 STATE OF CONNECTICUT	 LAND TRUST
 PRIVATE	 UTILITY
 NEWTOWN FOREST ASSOCIATION	 TOWN PURCHASE UNDER CONSIDERATION

PARKS & OPEN SPACE RESOURCES

Plan of Conservation & Development

Newtown, Connecticut

HMA HARRALL-MICHALOWSKI
ASSOCIATES, Incorporated

Hartford, Connecticut

July 2002

C. OPEN SPACE INITIATIVES

The Town of Newtown has approximately 1,100 acres of open space lands and 177 acres of parkland. Most Town owned open space was obtained as a result of lands donated to the Town through the subdivision of residential land. The Town has also successfully pursued the protection of open space by working with non-profit organizations and the State of Connecticut. The Town is not alone in its quest to preserve open space for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations of Newtown residents. The Newtown Forest Association (NFA), the oldest land trust organization in Connecticut, has developed a very successful program to preserve open space. The NFA is an all volunteer organization with protected open space



Old Purdy Road Trail



holdings in Newtown totaling 1,000 acres. Several other land trust organizations also preserve lesser amounts of open space. The State of Connecticut is Newtown's largest benefactor in preserving open space, with State owned forest, park and agricultural land holdings totaling nearly 2,800 acres.

In 1999, the First Selectman created the Ad Hoc Open Space Task Force to make recommendations regarding the acquisition or preservation of open space. Since that time this volunteer organization has spent many hours identifying existing open space resources and prepared a report titled Open Space

in Newtown 2002. This report identified strategies for the preservation of open space and the linking of open space resources by a town-wide system of trails. The Board of Selectmen, Legislative Council and Open Space Task Force have held discussions on the future funding of open space acquisitions, including the concept for the development of a capital fund to support future open space acquisitions.



State Open Space – Kazan Property

TABLE 3	
TOWN OF NEWTOWN	
Open Space Inventory	
Open Space Category	Assessment Acreage
Town Parks	
Deep Brook at Fairfield Hills	10.00
Dickinson Park	29.91
Lake Lillinonah Park	3.10
Oakview Field	3.60
Orchard Hill Park	24.30
Treadwell Park	60.00
Walnut Tree Field	<u>46.76</u>
Subtotal	177.67
Town Owned Open Space	1,098.86
Newtown Forest Association	1,000.00
Private Organizations	
Brookfield OS Legacy	3.69
BSA- Cullens Youth Ass.	17.53
Fairfield Fish and Game	301.03
Nature Conservancy	49.44
Pequot Fish and Game	81.08
Pootatuck Club	80.90
Pootatuck Land Company	282.20
Ram's Pasture (Newtown Cemetary Association)	10.30
Sandy Hook Athletic Club	7.85
Weantinoge Heritage	<u>35.57</u>
Subtotal	869.59
State of Connecticut	
Collis P. Huntington State Park	38.09
Department of Agriculture	341.00
Kazan Property	162.02
Paugussett State Forest North	752.50
Paugussett State Forest South	1,099.88
Rocky Glen Park	44.17
Former Bridgeport Hydraulic Properties	<u>637.55</u>
Subtotal	3,075.21
Public Utilities	
Bridgeport Hydraulic	45.50
Northeast Utilities Generation	233.00
Rocky River Realty	55.00
United Water of Connecticut	<u>8.12</u>
Subtotal	341.62
Golf Courses	
Newtown Country Club	40.00
Rock Ridge Country Club	<u>60.00</u>
Subtotal	100.00
Open Space Inventory- Totals	6,662.95
Source: HMA, with assistance provided by the Ad HOC Open Space Task Force, Town Conservation Officer and Town Tax Assessor	